



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4 KC RESIDENTS INDICTED IN COUNTERFEIT CHECK CONSPIRACY

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that four Kansas City, Mo., residents were indicted by a federal grand jury today for conspiracy to pass counterfeit checks.

Thomas E. Watson, 32, **Lateresa N. Witherspoon**, 22, **Cedric L. Phillips**, 22, and **Taniesha N. Bowman**, 26, all of Kansas City, were charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City.

The federal indictment alleges that the co-defendants conspired to pass counterfeit checks between Dec. 5, 2003, and April 19, 2004. The indictment alleges that the co-defendants acquired bank routing information for checking accounts, obtained computer software called “VersaCheck” and used the routing numbers and computer software to produce counterfeit checks.

The indictment alleges that the co-defendants then hired and persuaded others to make purchases using the counterfeit checks at retail businesses in the Western District of Missouri. The proceeds of each check would then be split among the participating conspirators, according to the indictment.

Specifically, the indictment alleges that **Witherspoon** passed a counterfeit check in the amount of \$1,436.72, on Dec. 23, 2003, to purchase merchandise from a Toys-R-Us store in Overland Park, Kan.

The indictment alleges that **Witherspoon** passed another counterfeit check in the amount of \$7,085.67, on Jan. 21, 2004, at a Comp USA store in Overland Park.

The indictment alleges that **Bowman** attempted to purchase merchandise using a counterfeit check in the amount of \$6,989.03, on Feb. 25, 2004, from the Comp USA store in Overland Park.

The indictment alleges that a co-conspirator attempted to cash a counterfeit check in the amount of \$949.27, on April 1, 2004, at a Buyrite Foods store in Kansas City. The indictment alleges **Watson** used a personal computer to make the counterfeit check used in the transaction.

Graves cautioned that the charges contained in the indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John E. Cowles. It was investigated by the United States Secret Service, the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department and the Overland Park, Kan., Police Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow